

Al (folklore)

Al (or ***Hal***) (Persian: آل; Armenian: Ալ or Ալք; Mongolian: Гал; (*Qal*); Oirat: һал; Russian: Алы) is a class of demon in the folklore of the Caucasus, Iran, Central Asia, and Armenia. Als are demons of childbirth, interfering with human reproduction. The al is known by various other names, including *alk* in Armenian and Kurdish, *ol*, *hāl* and *xāl* in Tajikistan and Afghanistan, *almasti* or *albasti* in Central Asian Turkic-speaking countries, and *halmasti* among the Dards.^[1]

Contents

Other languages

Traditions

See also

References

Further reading

Other languages

- Armenian: Ալ or Ալք (*Al* or *Alk*)^[2]
- Lezgian: Ал (*Al*)
- Georgian: აღი (*Al*i**)
- Tat: Ол (*Ol*)
- Talysh: Ала (*Ala*)
- Udi: һал (*hal*)
- Kurdish: *Alk* or *Hal*
- Turkmen: Ал (*Al*)
- Persian: آل (*Āl*)

Traditions

In Armenian tradition, the als steal the lung, liver and heart of women in childbirth, pregnant women, and women who have just given birth. They also destroy embryos in the womb, causing miscarriage, and can steal babies forty days after childbirth, replacing them with *imps*.^[1] They are male and female. They have clay noses and fiery eyes, and "appear with sharp fangs, disheveled hair, copper claws, iron teeth, the tusks of a wild boar and sagging breasts, resembling a crone."^[3] After stealing the organs of a woman, the al attempts to escape and cross the first source of water, after which the woman cannot be saved. Apotropaic wards against als include methods used against other demons (such as charms, prayers, iron objects, onions, and garlic), and preventing the al from reaching water.^[4]

In Iran, the al is "a bony, thin old woman, with a clay nose, red face, and a straw or reedy basket hanging from its shoulder, in which the liver or lung of the young mother is placed."^[1] In Central Asia, the al is customarily "a fat, ugly and hairy crone with sagging breasts, the one hanging over one shoulder, while hanging over her other shoulder is a woolen bag ... in which she has placed the heart and liver of her victim."^[5]

According to numerous Near Eastern traditions, God created an al for Adam's first consort, but the earth-born Adam couldn't adapt to the al's fiery nature; this is the origin of the enmity between the al and Eve and her daughters.^[3]

The al is first documented in European literature in the middle of the 19th century.^[5]

See also

- Abyzou
- Lamia
- Lilith

References

1. Asatrian, 150.
2. *Götter und Mythen der Kaukasischen und Iranischen Völker*, Carsten Colpe, p. 89
3. Asatrian, 149.
4. Asatrian, 149-150.
5. Asatrian, 153.

Further reading

- Asatrian, Garnik (2001). "Āl Reconsidered". *Iran & the Caucasus*. **5** (1): 149–156. doi:10.1163/157338401X00189 (<https://doi.org/10.1163%2F157338401X00189>). ISSN 1609-8498 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/1609-8498>). JSTOR 4030855 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4030855>).
- Ananikian, Mardiros H. (1925). "Chapter XI: The World of Spirits and Monsters" (<http://rbedrosian.com/anamik6.htm>). *Armenian Mythology. The Mythology of All Races*. Volume VII. New York.

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Al_\(folklore\)&oldid=1052921661](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Al_(folklore)&oldid=1052921661)"

This page was last edited on 31 October 2021, at 21:28 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.